



## Surveys and Polls Show Strong Support for Afterschool

In addition to the Afterschool Alliance's *Voters' Polls* and *America After 3 PM*, a number of other surveys and polls have been conducted in recent years to gauge American support for afterschool. Across these various polls, it is clear that the American public supports afterschool and wants to see afterschool opportunities expanded for our nation's children and youth.

### Afterschool Viewed as Critical and in Demand

- A 2006 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that two in three voters (65 percent) say that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for their community, with over a majority strongly saying the programs are necessary.
- A 2004 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that nearly nine out of ten voters are concerned that children are unsupervised after school with too much unstructured time and agree that children need some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day.
- A 2003 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that more than half of voters say there are not enough afterschool programs available to children and teens.
- *America After 3 PM* finds that parents of 15.3 million children say their children would participate in afterschool - if a program were available.
- Eighty-five percent of teens surveyed by Public Agenda said that peers who participate in afterschool activities are better off than those who do not.
- According to Public Agenda, low-income and minority parents are much more likely than higher-income and white parents to say they have trouble finding high-quality, convenient and affordable activities for their children.
- When asked how important after-school programs are for children in their area, 95 percent of PTA member respondents said "important" or "very important" for elementary school and middle school children, and 82 percent said "important" or "very important" for high school students.
- Eighty-three percent of National School Board Association members surveyed assert that it is essential or very important that afterschool programs are maintained in their district.
- One in three 8- to 12-year-olds are either "home alone" or "hanging out with friends" after school according to a 2005 Junior Achievement/Harris survey. In a 2003 survey, Junior Achievement found that 79 percent of boys and 84 percent of girls who do not currently participate in afterschool programs are interested in such activities.
- According to Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' poll of working moms, despite public focus on school shootings and other violence during the school day, nearly nine in ten working mothers said they are most concerned about their children's safety during the afterschool hours.
- A teen survey commissioned by the Taco Bell Foundation finds that nearly 75 percent of American college graduates believe today's teenagers have far less supervision than previous

generations and nine out of 10 adults (89 percent) surveyed agree that getting teens involved in an after-school program will help them be more creative, responsible and happier adults.

- A 2003 study of afterschool in Boston found that overall demand for afterschool programs has increased, and an overwhelming majority of parents want programming for their children.
- Eighty percent of Virginia voters say they are concerned about the amount of unstructured time children have and 72 percent agree that afterschool programs are essential for their community.
- Ninety-six percent of Rhode Island parents believe all children should have some type of organized activity or place to go after school.
- Sixty percent of parents with children who do not participate in afterschool programs in Connecticut agree that their children would be likely to attend a convenient, affordable, quality program if it were available.
- Thirty-five percent of California teens say there are not enough supervised afterschool activities in their areas that interest them. Seventy-seven percent of these teens would be likely to participate if interesting activities were available to them.
- Fifty-five percent of Chicago high school students say there are no safe places to go after school.
- A survey commissioned by America's Promise, The Alliance for Youth finds that two out of three young people nationwide wish there were more places they could hang out where they could feel safe and have fun.

#### **Afterschool Meets a Variety of Needs**

- A 2003 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that voters do not want to see afterschool programs become an extension of the school day and do not believe that improving test scores should be the primary goal of the afterschool programs. Voters want to see children in afterschool programs offered hands-on learning opportunities, recreation, community service, and creative activities that inspire them to learn and grow.
- Voters believe afterschool programs can address areas beyond a traditional safety and academic focus. The strongest areas for additional support include: reducing high school dropout rates, helping children and teens prepare for college, and helping build strong and safe communities.
- PTA members believe afterschool programs' primary benefit is safety and supervision, followed closely by development, consisting of learning new things, social interaction, and academic achievement.
- School board members with afterschool programs give them high marks in providing services that directly impact classroom achievement: 82 percent say their programs do a good or excellent job of assisting students who are struggling academically.
- When Fight Crime: Invest in Kids asked working mothers to name their top concern as kids headed back to school, nearly six in ten working mothers listed crime, violence, or risky behavior, like drugs alcohol and sex.
- According to a 2004 Junior Achievement/Harris Interactive poll, afterschool participants expressed interest in wide variety of activities after school, such as sports, art or music, working with computers, learning how to run a business, spending time with mentors and learning about various careers.

- In Boston, more than eight in ten parents believe that afterschool programming is an essential public service, critical to their children's academic and social success.
- 88 percent of parents in Connecticut with children in afterschool programs agree that knowing that their child is in a supervised afterschool program helps them better focus on their jobs during the after school hours.

#### **Concerns about Funding are a Common Theme**

- A 2004 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that nationally, 82 percent of voters want elected officials (at all levels) to increase funding for afterschool programs. 76 percent support increased funding for afterschool, even if it leads to a tax increase.
- Polls of voters consistently show a commitment to afterschool through good and bad economic times. Voters say they are willing to use taxpayer money and even pay more in taxes.
- A 2006 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of voters want their newly elected state and local leaders to increase funding for afterschool programs.
- A 2003 Afterschool Alliance poll finds that voters worry that if no new funds come to afterschool programs, as a result of reduced federal funding or because of budget problems in the states, programs will have to reduce their services or close their doors.
- An Afterschool Alliance web-based survey finds that afterschool programs are oversubscribed and facing tough financial times. More than half of survey respondents say that funding has decreased a little or a lot over the past two years. Another 25 percent say funding is unchanged. When asked about the security of funding over the next five years, fewer than half of respondents say they feel secure about their funding for the next one to two years and only 23 percent feel secure about their funding for the next three to five years.
- PTA Members cited financial reasons as the explanation for why their school does not offer an afterschool program, and a significant proportion of PTA members expressed some level of concern regarding the affordability of afterschool programs.
- Fifty-two percent of surveyed NSBA members expect that their afterschool programs will have to be reduced somewhat or even cut entirely in the next few years due to proposed funding cuts.
- Nine in ten working mothers agree with the statement: "America could greatly reduce youth violence if Congress expanded prevention efforts like after-school programs." Further, when asked which strategy would be more effective in reducing school and youth violence, seven out of ten mothers choose investments in afterschool programs over investments in security measures like metal detectors.
- In Virginia, a majority of voters would support an expansion of afterschool programs even if it meant a \$100 increase in their property taxes.
- Demand for afterschool programming in Boston is high and cost is the most frequently cited barrier among parents whose children currently do not participate in afterschool; 51 percent of parents with children not in afterschool reported that it was because it "cost too much."
- The most often-cited reason that Rhode Island parents gave for their child not participating in afterschool programs was a lack of availability of such programs and a lack of transportation from school or to home for such programs. If access were improved, participation would improve dramatically. Eighty-four percent of Rhode Island parents said they would be likely to utilize an optional afterschool learning and activities program if one were made available.

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